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Office hours 1:30-2:30 MWF, by appointment, or any other time I am in

Course Objectives and Expected Learning Outcomes

1. Students will become familiar with or deepen their understanding of basic metaphysical concepts such as:

Reality/fundamental reality
Analytic/synthetic distinction
Ontology
Descriptive v Prescriptive metaphysics
Fictionalism
Ontological commitment

2. Students will become familiar in depth with specific metaphysical topics:

"ordinary" objects, colors, mathematical objects, causes, fictions, concepts, change, persistence, objectivity

3. Students will improve their ability to carefully analyze philosophical texts and arguments

4. Students will improve their ability to communicate philosophical ideas in writing

5. Students will improve their ability to verbally communicate philosophically

Course Narrative

Traditionally, metaphysics is about the nature of reality. I can't promise you will learn the ultimate nature of reality in this course, but you will learn a great deal about how philosophers and others have thought about reality. My main goals in the course are that you learn to critically read, evaluate,

write and talk about complex arguments. This especially includes identifying unstated assumptions and unclarities and ambiguities. Learning about specific topics, like the arguments for and against the reality of colors, causes , characters or corporations are secondary, as are knowing the difference between Hume and Kant's views on causation. But we may as well read interesting articles while we are developing the skills.

Grading:

The requirements for the course follow from my goals. There will be questions on the reading to be answered in Owlspace before each meeting. I will be looking for short answers showing that you have done the reading; indications that you don't understand some of the material are as valuable as what you do understand because it helps me structure the class meeting. I include class participation as part of the grade both because talking about arguments is one of the skills I am concerned about, but also I find that a class that shares ideas is better for everyone. There will be three papers of approximately 3000 words during the semester and you will rewrite one of them for the final piece of work due at the end of exam period. There will be no exams.

Course requirements and grading policies

Everyone will be required to write **short answers** to questions on the daily reading or on course topics in advance of class meetings. Assignments will be due at 11 am prior to class in the course Assignment site. Answers turned in after 11 am but before class will receive up to half-credit.

Everyone is required to write **three papers** and to **rewrite one** as the final project for the course. I require rewriting because in many classes students are successful in sketching a clever idea that isn't terribly well worked out and don't develop the skills of rewriting to meet objections, clarify points, elaborate ideas, etc. Revising ideas is a very important philosophical skill, and pretty useful elsewhere too. Paper should be submitted in the course Owlspace Dropboxes

Paper topics must be approved by me and are restricted to things that exist, or don't.

Class participation and some **"real world" applications** of metaphysics will also be part of the grade.

Time line:

Paper 1	11:59 pm Sun Sept 28
Paper 2	11:59 pm Sun Nov 2
Paper 3	11:59 pm Fri Dec 5
Final paper	5:00 pm Wed Dec 17

Grading Numbers

Papers 3 x 100	300
Final paper	200
Daily questions 24 x 15	360
Participation 3 x 25	75
"Real world" apps	65
	1000

Honor Code Policy

All assignments are open book in that
1. Any material from the course may be used at any point.
2. Other sources—books, websites, persons—may be used in the process of writing daily assignments or papers, as long as the assignment or paper includes a statement of that use and appropriate citation in the case of quotes and similar paraphrases.

Texts and other required material

Michael Jubien, ***Contemporary Metaphyics***: ***An Introduction*** from Blackwell Publishing I have used this book before and it is a good systematic approach and gives us something to contrast with other positions on many main issues.

John Losee, ***Theories of Causality***, from Transactions Publishers. This has good summaries of a lot of ideas about causation from Aristotle to Heisenberg. I will argue that our concept(s) of causation are very basic to

our thinking about a lot of metaphysical issues so those are central to the course and will occupy about the middle third. We will use Losee as an intro and also read many of the original sources he discusses.

Other required material will be available in Owlspace or at links listed in Owlspace..

Disability statement

Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities will need to contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center.

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